

## **PD 8: Northern Virginia Regional Commission**

The Northern Virginia Region (NVPD) covers an area of about 1,300 square miles and is home to more than 2 million people. This region includes nine local governments. These are the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William, the Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park and the Towns of Herndon, Leesburg, Vienna and Dumfries.

From the rugged Blue Ridge Mountains in the west, eastward across the rolling Piedmont to the gently sloping Coastal Plain, the region is characterized by a variety of landscapes and land uses. Farms, forests, sprawling subdivisions, open fields and densely populated urban areas all make up the NVPD region. Marked by topographic variety, numerous rivers and streams and many notable cultural and historic sites, the area offers a full range of outdoor experiences. Whether hiking the Appalachian Trail or horse-back riding in Loudoun County's hunt country, exploring the forests of Prince William County or paddling the Potomac River, the outdoor enthusiast's choices of activities are many.

Although predominantly urban/suburban in character, the NVPD includes extensive areas that are rural in nature. In sharp contrast to the vibrant, highly developed localities of Arlington and Alexandria in the east, the western part of the region is characterized by rolling farmland, winding country roads and small historic towns. Picturesque villages such as Aldie, Waterford and Middleburg, once agricultural market towns, serve as small commercial centers for a rural area experiencing the intense pressures of nearby urbanization. Discussions of "smart growth" and sustainable development are common as the region struggles to cope with an unprecedented population increase and accompanying demand for services and facilities. The preservation of remaining open space in urban areas and the effective management and protection of undeveloped land in regions of rapid growth are among the greatest challenges facing the Northern Virginia Planning District.

As the region continues to struggle with one of the fastest growing populations in the state, the accompanying demands for services and facilities strain the municipalities throughout the region. In 2000, the region had a population of 1,793,699. By 2005, the population had grown to 2,021,100, an increase of approximately 12.7 percent. With all the localities in the region experiencing growth, it is anticipated the regional population will increase to 2,455,500 by 2020. Loudoun, Prince William and Manassas Park are among the fastest growing localities in the state, with growth rates from 2000-2005 of 48.8%, 26.5% and 27.3%, respectively.

### **Demand/survey findings**

Based on the findings of the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* (VOS), the top ten most popular outdoor activities in the region are driving for pleasure, walking for pleasure, visiting historic sites, visiting natural areas, swimming, sunbathing and beach use, fishing, picnicking, using a playground, and boating. In support of the finding that access to recreational waters is the most needed facility, four of the top ten activities are water dependent--swimming, sunbathing and beach use, fishing and boating. The second most needed facilities identified are trails close to home.

The Demand, Supply and Needs Analysis, Table ----, compares the existing supply of outdoor recreation facilities in the region with the demand measured by the 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey and computes need. The needs are then projected out to the year 2020 using population projections. Areas where there are still unmet recreational facility needs are: basketball courts, campsites, trails, soccer fields, golf courses, swimming pools, tennis courts, volleyball courts, and hunting acres.

Specific needs identified in the Northern Virginia region are:

- Water access for fishing, swimming and boating
- Trails for fitness, bicycling, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding and off-road motorcycling
- Multipurpose fields for soccer, football, and other field sports
- Natural areas for nature studies
- Parks with camping and picnicking
- Additional basketball, tennis, and volleyball courts.

## **Outdoor Recreation**

The following are general recommendations for meeting outdoor recreation needs in the region:

- Due to the increase in cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth, consideration should be given to making signs, literature and audio displays available in other languages.
- Better serve non-English speaking cultural groups by: establishing trust relationships; hire bilingual staff; advertise in the other language media; host multi-cultural themed events; create programs with the community, not for them; invite, involve, and include cultural groups in all aspects of service delivery.
- State and regional agencies should place a high priority on providing recreation opportunities to the Commonwealth's urban population in "close-to home" settings to allow for better access and to meet the measured demand for such facilities.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.

## **Land Conservation**

The land conservation map for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands (identified by management agencies)
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms. (See Chapter III. Land Conservation)

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### **Land Trusts Operating in the PDC**

- Chesapeake Bay Foundation,
- Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
- Potomac Conservancy
- McLean Land Conservancy
- Accokeek Foundation
- Piedmont Environmental Council
- Waterford Foundation

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### **General recommendations for land conservation include:**

- To meet the Chesapeake Bay Agreement goal for watershed protection, and Governor Kaine's stated goal of preserving 400,000 acres of land in the state by 2010, strong state tax incentives for land conservation should be maintained, and a dedicated funding source should be established by the General Assembly.
- All localities should continue to promote the conservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in chapter III. Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates, development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.
- Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.
- Land conservation projects should offer a wide range of public benefits including water quality protection, habitat preservation, and public access.

### **Specific land conservation recommendations for the Northern Virginia region:**

- Strengthen protection and management of conservation sites on federal lands.
- Consideration must be given for the protection of passive natural areas to preserve valuable habitat while enhancing the urban experience.
- With the intense pressures for growth and development in the Northern Virginia region there has been an intensifying effort to provide protection for key natural areas for water quality, recreation and natural resource protection.

### **Green Infrastructure Recommendations**

The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning presented in Chapter IV.

- Local governments should continue to take the lead in securing green infrastructure through planning tools.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.

- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.
- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

## **Programs**

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation.

### **Trails & Greenways**

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

#### **General Greenway Recommendations related to trails and green ways include:**

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.  
State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunk-line statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections within their skill and capability levels.

#### **NVPDC Recommendations related to trails and greenways include:**

- Continue to develop the components of the Council of Governments' Green Space Project to support the top issues for the region; including the priority greenways.

Trunk-line trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the

success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross-jurisdictional boundaries to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunk-line trails existing or underway in Northern Virginia include:

- 1) The **East Coast Greenway**, proposed to span almost 3000 miles from Maine to Florida, aims to connect all the major cities of the East Coast along a continuous off-road path. This trail will make use of waterfront esplanades, canal paths, railroad corridors and park paths for cyclists, hikers, skaters, equestrians and people with disabilities as it connects urban, suburban and rural America. Identify and secure the best corridor for The East Coast Greenway as it traverses the Northern Virginia region.
- 2) The **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST)** connects the outstanding natural and cultural features along a 700-mile corridor of the Potomac River from the Chesapeake Bay to the Allegheny Highlands. The National Park System manages this partnership, which has been the target of significant investments in funds, time and expertise by individuals, organizations and government agencies. Due to the National Scenic Trail designation, localities that host the PHNST should be cognizant of the need to protect the setting with buffers, setbacks, vegetative screening and similar viewshed preservation tools. o  
Complete development of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, including a parallel water trail with an adequate system of public access facilities and use areas, should take place.
- 3) The **Appalachian Trail** is an existing National Scenic Trail. Because of this special designation, localities that host the Appalachian Trail should be cognizant of protecting viewsheds from existing overlooks and other scenic values of the corridor. For more than 75 years the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its member clubs have worked voluntarily with federal, state, and local governments, as well as numerous individual landowners, to solve problems associated with the acquisition, development, administration, management and maintenance of the trail.

**Specific trails and greenways recommendations for the Northern Virginia region include;**

- 4) The **Bull Run –Occoquan Trail** – an 18-mile national Recreation Trail for hiking and equestrian use passes through 5,000 acres of Occoquan Shoreline parklands, accessing four regional parks and providing shelter for a profusion of birds and other native wildlife. The localities that host the trail should be cognizant of the need to protect the setting with buffers, setbacks, vegetative screening and similar viewshed preservation tools. Consider connecting this trail to the PHNST.
- 5) Develop the Leesylvania State Park to Prince William Forest Park Connector.
- 6) Complete the Fairfax Cross County Trail to link existing local trails and stream valley parks between Fort Belvoir and Great Falls National Park.
- 7) Develop the proposed Broad Run Stream Valley Greenway/ Linear Park, from Lake Manassas to Lake Jackson, to include multi-use trails with pocket parks scattered along its length to provide opportunities for active recreation.
- 8) Continue the Accotink Greenway Trail from Lake Accotink Park to Pohick Bay/Gunston Cove.
- 9) Develop the Potomac River greenways.
- 10) Complete the Mount Vernon Trail from Roosevelt Island to the American Legion Bridge (I-495).

- 11) Complete the W&OD Trail to connect with the Appalachian Trail. Upon completion, the W&OD Trail will be an effective east-west axis serving as an inter-county collector for existing and developing trails throughout the region.
- 12) Complete the connection between the W&OD Trail and White's Ferry.
- 13) Construct a trail from the W&OD Trail to the Potomac River in Northwest Fairfax County.
- 14) Continue to develop greenway trail systems along the Difficult Run, Sugarland Run, Pimmit Run, Pohick/South Run, Turkeycock/Holmes Run, Cameron Run and Rocky/Cub Run Stream Valleys.
- 15) Enhance and properly identify Interstate Bike Route 1.

### **Blueways & Water Access (Boating, Beaches & Swimming, Pier and Bank Fishing, Natural Area, Blueways)**

Water access remains a high priority in Northern Virginia. The accessibility to water resources has an aesthetic appeal and enhances the quality of life for all citizens. Water access is one of the highest recreational demands in Virginia with fishing ranking 7<sup>th</sup> and boating 10<sup>th</sup> in popularity.

Additional water access to Virginia's rivers and streams is necessary to meet water-related recreational demands. While Northern Virginia has water resources, the public is very limited in its ability to access water resources. Whenever roads cross bodies of water and renovation or relocation is planned, the potential for providing parking areas, fishing access and boat launches should be incorporated into the road improvements. Any place where access has historically occurred should be maintained and enhanced. *The Chesapeake Bay Area Access Plan* could assist in determining the areas of greatest need for additional public access. Where opportunities are available, lands should be acquired or use agreements arranged to help meet the demand for public access. Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams and other river obstacles.

### **Beach Access Recommendations**

- Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.
- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.
- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

### **Water Trail General Recommendations**

- The navigable rivers of the state should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along Virginia rivers and streams.

### **Specific water trail recommendations:**

- 16) Develop the Potomac River Water Trail to provide inter-jurisdictional boating opportunities and access to sites along the Potomac River. The extension of this water trail, upstream to Great Falls, is suggested.
- 17) County commissioners, mayors, businesses, tourism agencies, and non-profit organizations should continue to promote the Captain John Smith Water Trail along the Potomac River.
- 18) Extend the Occoquan Water Trail to provide inter-jurisdictional boating opportunities and access to sites along the Occoquan River.

#### **Water Access Recommendations**

- Old ferry landing sites and bridges should be considered for opportunities for water access.
- Provide an additional 49 water access points in the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia to meet the commitments of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.
- Increase public fishing access throughout the entire region.

#### **Specific water access recommendations:**

- 19) The need for a boathouse on the Potomac River in Arlington has been identified by citizen groups interested in promoting youth rowing programs, offering water access for educational programs and providing opportunities for area citizens and visitors to enjoy non-motorized boating.
- 20) Concerned parties are encouraged to continue efforts to make the much needed improvements at Belle Haven Marina and develop a cooperative agreement that will result in the continued operation of the facility and its proper maintenance. The affordable and convenient access to the Potomac River that Belle Haven Marina offers makes it a popular and valuable amenity in an area lacking in water access sites.
- 21) Boating, fishing and beach access to the Potomac and Occoquan rivers should be increased significantly.

#### **Historic and Landscape Resources**

The Virginia Outdoors Survey (VOS) identified visiting historic and natural areas as 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, respectively. With its close proximity to the Nation's Capital and its long influence on our nation's history, protecting and enhancing the historical, cultural and natural sites of the PDC becomes paramount. Significant historical sites include George Washington's home & grist mill, Manassas Battlefield, the Virginia Canal, Arlington Cemetery, just to list a few of the varied sites within the Northern Virginia region. Connecting these sites through alternative transportation facilities will go far to continuing to make them a draw to the region and protecting the inherent qualities of each special site.

#### **General historic and landscape recommendations:**

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
- Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.

- Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.
- Consideration should be given to the expansion of historic districts to preserve resources and promote economic development.

### **Specific historic and landscape recommendations:**

- 22) DCR and local governments as desired should support designation for a nationally recognized historic corridor from Monticello in Virginia to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (**Journey Through Hallowed Ground** - [www.hallowedground.org](http://www.hallowedground.org)) and to provide support if it is approved by Congress.
- 23) **Manassas National Battlefield Park**, a 5,000-acre property of the National Park Service dedicated to the preservation of the scene of two major Civil War battles, should be protected for the integrity of this important historic resource. Localities should strongly consider the impacts of future development on this property. Coordinate with the National Park Service to implement the Manassas Battlefield General Management Plan.
- 24) Support should be given for the designation and development of the **Washington-Rochambeau Trail**, as a National Historic Trail, which follows the revolutionary trip of George Washington and the Comte de Rochambeau travel after the victory at Yorktown.

### **Scenic Resources**

Though often over looked, scenic resources can be a key to quality of life. Many use their eyes to determine if an area is safe, well cared for and adequately protected. These judgments, when done in an area that has protected its scenic areas, can be an economic generator and an attraction for business. Taking this into account there are a number of things a community can do to enhance the scenic quality of an area.

### **General Recommendations for scenic resources include:**

- Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.
- Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.
- Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

### **Specific Recommendations for scenic resources include:**

- 25) Protect the viewsheds of the Appalachian Trail, both to and from the trail.
- 26) Create a corridor management plan for Route 15, Journey Through Hallowed Ground corridor.
- 27) Continue efforts to protect the natural and scenic resources of the Bull Run Mountains.

### **Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways**

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural, and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical to attractive and welcoming communities. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for



promotion and protection. Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter VII.

**General recommendations for scenic roads:**

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.

**Specific roads to be studied for inclusion into the Virginia Scenic Byway Program:**

28) George Washington Parkway (GW) was designated as an All American Road. Continued Protection of its corridor is critical for it to maintain its national status. The Blue Ridge Parkway and Colonial Parkway were also designated at the same time.

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Here is a list of some of the driving trails in NVPD region:

Journey Through Hallowed Ground	Civil War Trail -Northern Virginia
Washington- Rochambeau Trail	The World War II Heritage Trail
Virginia Birding & Wildlife Trail	George Washington Parkway
Civil Rights In Education Heritage Trail	African-American Heritage Trail

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**Scenic Rivers**

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia’s Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, bio-diversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In the NVRC region there are currently two designated scenic river segments; Goose Creek and Catoctin Creek. In order to more successfully protect river resources, the following general and specific recommendations are given:

29) Continued protection of Goose Creek and Catoctin Creek could be accomplished through creation of a 300-foot setback for development along the designated sections.

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The Goose Creek Scenic River Committee has been in existence since the 1970’s when Goose Creek was designated a scenic river. They have been diligent at working with Loudoun County, industry and developers to insure protection of the critical water resource of Goose Creek. In 2006, they won an Honorable Mention for Best Preservation of a Scenic Water Corridor from Scenic Virginia in 2006 for their efforts.

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**Watershed Resources**

The NVPD is in the Shenandoah/Potomac River, which is a sub-basin of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. A list of watershed groups that facilitate local stewardship are listed below:

**Watershed Resources Recommendations**

- Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans through DCR’s Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act land use management initiative.

## **Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations**

Outdoor Environmental Education needs are being assessed for each region. The information about potential outdoor education facility needs will be identified in a later draft.

### **General Recommendations for Environmental and Land Stewardship:**

- Federal, state, regional and local agencies will provide citizens access to stewardship education and conservation resources.
- Federal, state, regional and local agencies will promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences and their relationship to environmentally literate citizenry.

### **Federal Facilities**

The National Park Service (NPS), the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the US Fish and Wildlife Service all own and operate lands within NVPD region. These lands positively contribute to the region's outdoor recreation and conservation land base. These agencies in partnership with state, regional, and local partners have identified recommendations listed below.

- A general recommendation for the protection of Natural Heritage resources is to strengthen protection and management of conservation sites on federal lands.

### **National Parks**

National Parks provide the localities with tremendous economic benefits. Of the 19 NPS sites in the state, eight sites are located in NVPD region. These parks generated over \$107 million to the local area and provided 2447 jobs. To continue to reap the benefits of such sites within the region cooperative efforts need to be taken.

### **National Parks Recommendations**

- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites as a component of an interconnected statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilize partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.
- Continue collaborative efforts through the Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Program and Potomac Heritage National Scenic to connect people to heritage, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities and resources.
- Localities are encouraged to work with federal property managers to include all federal lands as possible sites for the development of trails, field sport facilities, water access points and publicly accessed open space.

### **Specific NPS Recommendations**

- 30) Prince William Forest Park is an outstanding natural resource in a rapidly developing area. Continue work to protect the boundaries and connect the park resources with other county and state facilities.
- 31) Local and state governments should coordinate with the National Park Service to implement the Manassas Battlefield General Management Plan.
- 32) Coordinate with the National Park Service to implement the Great Falls National Park General Management Plan.
- 33) Coordinate with the National Park Service to implement the Wolf Trap Farm National Park General Management Plan.

- 34) Coordinate with the National Park Service to implement the Theodore Roosevelt Island National Park General Management Plan.
- 35) Coordinate with the National Park Service to implement the Arlington House National Park General Management Plan.

### **Bureau of Land Management Recommendations**

- 36) Meadowood Farm, adjacent to Mason Neck State Park and a BLM property, should be managed to substantially increase wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities in the area including horseback riding, hiking and mountain biking.

### **National Wildlife Refuges & Fish Hatcheries Recommendations**

The USFWS will coordinate and implement the following recommendations with regard to outdoor recreation and the NWRs:

- 37) Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge, made up of the former Woodbridge Research Facility and the area known as the Marumsco National Wildlife Refuge, is part of the Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge, as are Mason Neck and Featherstone NWRs. Continued consideration must be given to enhanced public access to these sites and buffer protection.

### **State Facilities**

#### **State Parks**

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond (GOB) referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement which has been handled in 2 ways. First, an advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, is developed to participate through the entire development process of a state park master plan. Second, public meetings are held several times during the process to gain public input and the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation is open to the public. Any significant change to the plan or additions, the cost of which is in excess of \$500,000, requires public input.

State parks are listed on the Wildlife and Birding Trail. Numerous park sites participate in regional and local initiatives such as trail development and programming.

- 38) Mason Neck State Park (1,825 acres) is located in Fairfax County. This day use park focuses on interpretive and environmental education programs, in addition to providing hiking trails, picnicking, fishing, and a car top canoe launch. In accordance with the park master plan, and funded by the 2002 GOB, the park will be expanding the Elizabeth Hartwell Environmental Education Center into a more functional visitor center - office complex. An additional residence has also been funded. The master plan also recommends the renovation of the Jammes Complex into an overnight environmental education center. In addition to the unique natural resources of the park, it also has numerous cultural sites. The Taft Archaeological Site is on the National Register of Historic Places. Archaeological research is being conducted at the Lexington Plantation site. The natural and cultural resources of the park

create numerous opportunities for cooperative programming with Gunston Hall, Potomac River National Wildlife Refuge, Pohick Bay Regional Park and the Bureau of Land Management's Meadow Farm site. The park serves as an access point to the bike walk trail along Gunston Road. The park could also serve as an access point to the Potomac River Water Trail and proposed Occoquan Water Trail. The park's location on the Mason Neck peninsula, along with the other publicly owned and managed lands make the area suitable for links with the East Coast Greenway and Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The region offers the opportunity for other expanded trail opportunities.

39) Leesylvania (508 acres) is located in Prince William County, on a peninsula bordered by the Potomac River, Neabsco Creek and Powells Creek. The recreational offerings of the park include picnicking, picnic shelters, boating, bank and pier fishing, and hiking trails. The park has 2 launching ramps; sailboat hoists and a car top launch area for smaller boats. Through the 2002 GOB, the park obtained funds for an additional large picnic shelter with restrooms. The boat ramps, docks, gas and mooring piers were damaged during Hurricane Isabel and have since been repaired and improved with supplemental funds from the 2002 GOB. Along with the recreational facilities, the park offers an ideal setting for environmental education programming based out of its visitor/environmental education center. The park also contains culturally significant sites; the Leesylvania Archaeological site and the Civil War Gun Battery at Freestone Point which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also the site of what was then Leesylvania Plantation in Colonial America which was the birthplace of Henry Lee III (Light Horse Harry), Revolutionary War hero who would later father the Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Efforts are underway to create a connector trail between Leesylvania and Prince William Forest Park. The park's location on the Potomac River should create access opportunities for the Potomac River Water Trail, as well as the East Coast Greenway and Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

40) George Washington's Grist Mill Historical State Park will be transferred to the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association upon completion of the restoration projects.

#### **State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas Recommendations**

- The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to develop trail systems within wildlife management areas to facilitate access for nature study, bird watching, hunting and fishing. (Specific recommendations for WMA not available at this time)

#### **State Forests Recommendations**

- DOF will coordinate with, and seek the assistance of, local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

41) Continue to develop educational opportunities at Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest.

#### **Natural Areas**

Two Natural Area Preserve are located in the NVPD: Bull Run Mountain and Ellick Woodlands. These areas should continue to be managed to protect the scenic and natural resources of each.

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- Secure protection of wood turtle habitat
- Secure protection of diabase woodlands

42) Secure conservation easements and other permanent protection of critical lands along the Potomac Gorge.

#### **Historic Resource recommendations.**

43) Designate the Catoctin Rural Historic District in Loudoun County and continue to protect the properties within and adjacent to the district.

#### **Transportation**

Transportation issues are a great concern in Northern Virginia. The PDC is working with VDOT and other groups to develop coordinated multi-modal systems for the citizens of NVPD. The increasing bike, subway, bus and pedestrian commuters are using the alternatives in ever increasing numbers. Continued efforts include development of trails, bike routes, and waterways. Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation.

#### **General recommendations include:**

Provide alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints. ([www.vtrans.org](http://www.vtrans.org))

Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.

Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.

Transportation alternatives, specifically trails for walking, hiking and cycling and to connect people with destinations, should continue to be developed.

#### **Specific transportation recommendations include:**

44) Develop an alternative corridor for US Bike Route 1, which crosses the state north-south from Arlington to the North Carolina border, onto safer road corridors. This federal route is officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highways, and Transportation Officials. This route is shown on VDOT's official County Maps, and signed in the field.

45) Upgrade the W&OD Trail to accommodate increased commuter bicycle traffic.

#### **Other State Facilities (Colleges, Universities, Estuarine Research Reserves)**

The following state-owned properties contain significant undeveloped land that may have potential for recreational use. Each site should be assessed and cooperative use agreements developed where appropriate.

46) Community colleges may have acreage that should be evaluated for its recreational potential.

## **Local & Regional Parks & Recreation**

All of the municipalities in NVPC have park and recreation departments. These departments serve its citizens with an average per capita spending of \$90.90. Arlington and Alexandria have some of the highest per capita spending rates in Virginia, at \$158.68 and \$136.05 respectively. This compares to a statewide per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31; including \$85/51 from towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending from cities in Virginia.

## **Local & Regional Parks & Recreation Recommendations**

- Localities should continue to support their parks and recreation commissions.
- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should continue to explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships.
- Establish a “friends group,” which could evolve into a “park foundation.” The citizen group(s) can be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores.  
[http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1\\_RZ8/landfill\\_to\\_parks](http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks)

## **Local & Regional Parks & Recreation Facility Recommendations**

Representing the efforts of three counties and three cities – Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun counties and the cities of Alexandria, Falls Church and Fairfax – the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) provides almost two million citizens with some of the finest recreational facilities in the country. From wave pools to golf courses, boating facilities to quiet nature trails, the Northern Virginia regional parks offer visitors a full range of outdoors recreational opportunities. More than 10,000 acres of woodlands, streams, and rolling Virginia countryside are preserved in the 19 parks within the system. With most of its land in a natural state, NVRPA strives to balance resource protection with meeting the recreational needs of a diverse, dynamic, and growing population in a rapidly developing area. To that end, the NVRPA

actively pursues the acquisition of land and easements to preserve and protect areas of exceptional historic, cultural, natural, recreational, or aesthetic value.

- The NVRPA is encouraged to continue their effort to preserve open space in areas where build-out in the foreseeable future is a distinct possibility.

### **Specific Local & Regional Parks & Recreation Facility Recommendations**

- 47) Develop Laurel Hill Park, formerly a federal prison and currently owned and managed by Fairfax County Park Authority, in accordance with the master plan.
- 48) Complete the comprehensive master plan for Sully Woodlands Regional Park, a 4,400-acre site in western Fairfax County.

### **Other Federal & State Lands (Military & colleges/universities)**

- 49) With the relocation of more than 22,000 Department of Defense jobs to Fort Belvoir, the Army should promote non-motorized access to the facility by incorporating an extensive network of trails both on and off-site. Additionally, any surplus land should be identified as potential open space and for recreational opportunities.

### **Private Sector Recommendations**

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. Familiarity with the *Landowner Liability Law, Code of Virginia, Chapter 29.1-509* could encourage some landowners to enter into an agreement with a unit of government to provide public access while minimizing their liability. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

Developed campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas, and indoor recreational facilities help meet the needs identified in the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*. Within the Northern Virginia region, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes and swimming pools. Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, fishing and boating access.

The following **general recommendations** are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- Recreational use agreements and/or easements should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation.
- Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to make existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation, especially where applicable to trails and greenways development, knowledgeable about the Virginia Landowner Liability Law.
- Local, state, and federal outdoor recreation providers should support corporate recognition programs and improve corporate recognition for small businesses willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.

- Use the adaptive re-use of existing properties in urban areas to provide for recreational needs. Abandoned, unused available sites, including rail yards and empty “big box” buildings are all potential recreational assets. Creative approaches can be used to identify opportunities, acquire the sites, and develop them to meet residents’ needs.

#### **Specific Private Sector Recommendations**

- The mutual benefits enjoyed by a public/ private recreational partnership are apparent in the ongoing implementation of the **Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail** plan. Planners for the trail continue to engage the support of private enterprises including bed and breakfasts, museums, historic sites and recreational facilities to alert potential trail users to development of the trail, while current users enjoy the vast resources available throughout the corridor.
- The **Northern Virginia Visitors’ Consortium** is encouraged to continue its role in promoting partnerships to support the heritage and recreational opportunities in the NVPD.
- Planning to meet the recreational and open space needs of the NVPD will require cooperation among local governments, the development of inter-jurisdictional partnerships, private sector support and a dedicated source of funding for land acquisition and facility improvements.